

Senator Haskell, Representative Elliott and distinguished members of the committee:

Good morning and thank you for being here today. My name is Lydia Broderick and I am a student at Yale University and a member of the Every Voice Coalition. I live in New Haven, and I am a constituent of Representative Walker and Senator Winfield. I am testifying today in support of HB 6374, An Act Concerning Sexual Misconduct On College Campuses.

With campus sexual violence, from a distance it can sometimes be difficult to understand the numbers as real people and their experiences. For example, one in ten students: in my freshman class, that's at least 155 of my classmates who will experience sexual violence before we graduate. I know some of them. They will be disproportionately students of color, low-income, disabled, and queer and trans students.

Students like me come to Connecticut colleges and universities to learn, to find community, maybe to leave home for the first time and explore the world, and to think about the futures we want to build for ourselves and our communities. There should be no place for sexual violence in this story. The fact that it's there for so many of us is a deeply, gut-wrenchingly horrifying thought for me, and I hope it is for you too. All of this is what we know from the statistics and data we have. Campus sexual violence is an epidemic, and the status quo is not working.

We also know that we don't have all the facts. 90% of survivors don't report. We have no way of knowing how bad it really is, what's working, what isn't, and what might work to finally make campuses safe for all students. How can we expect schools to address this epidemic on their campuses if they can't see 90% of it? That's why a statewide campus climate survey every two years is so important to me. Without that transparency and opportunities for all students to be heard, there can be no real progress, and given where we are right now, I can't accept no progress.

For me, a two-year survey is particularly important to ensure that all students' voices are heard and we get accurate data. Schools need to be able to respond to insights from all students and reevaluate their campus cultures in real time. Survivors deserve to see their schools listen and respond to their experiences while they're still on campus.

I came to college excited but also justifiably afraid. Some of my first memories on campus include being warned about certain frats to avoid. Campus sexual violence was never just some abstract idea or statistic as a young person looking to go to college; it was and is a real, tangible fear. I wish it had been ridiculously wrong for me to come into college at eighteen afraid. I wish my campus and all campuses were safe and supportive communities free from all types of violence, this being, of course, only one of them.

I know that HB 6374 has the power to make Connecticut a nationwide leader in showing that we care deeply about what kind of communities our college and university campuses are. I hope that you care about that as much as I do, and I ask the members of the committee to vote this bill out of committee as soon as possible.

Thank you all for your time.

Lydia Broderick